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ABSTRACT

This volume contains nontechnical summaries of six studies related to the requirement for ascertaining community needs by the public broadcasting industry. The six studies include "Issues in Ascertaining the Different Needs of Urban and Rural Community Leaders," "Volunteer Ascertainment Panels," "Ascertainment Collection Methods for the Rural Public Station," "Method Dependent Opinion Leadership: Implications for Ascertainment of Black Community Needs for Public Television Stations," "Progress Report on Continuing Ascertainment: Jacksonville and Tallahassee, Florida," and "How to Conduct a Cooperative Market-Wide Community Leaders Survey." (AA)

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SIX EXPERIMENTS IN ASCERTAINMENT METHODOLOGY

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Introduction

Since the establishment of the ascertainment requirement for the Public Broadcasting industry, the need for information on different implementation strategies has become apparent. Recognizing the complexities involved in meeting these new requirements, especially for the small public stations, CPB's Office of Communication Research published the Ascertainment Handbook last year. The studies contained in this volume are published to provide additional assistance about special problems.

The following is a brief description of the contents of this volume,"Six Experiments in Ascertainment Methodology."

I. *Issues in Ascertaining the Different Needs of Urban and Rural Community Leaders,* by Robert K. Avery (with Research Assistants: Paige Birdsall and Antonio Rey).

This study, done in the KUED, Salt Lake City, Utah market, reveals that community size proves to be a significant determinant in types of problems identified. Both face-to-face and telephone interviews can be used in different size communities with equal effectiveness.

II. *Volunteer Ascertainment Panels,* by Alfred G. Smith (with Research Associates: Patrick A. Nester and D. Lynn Pulford).

This study was conducted by the Communication Research Center at the University of Texas, in conjunction with KLRN, Austin Texas. The special interests of this study are: (a) Tests of the efficacy of different ways of using volunteers, (b) Using hierarchies of panels, (c) Using self-anchoring communities, and (d) Suggestions for implementation and application elsewhere.

III. *Ascertainment Collection Methods for the Rural Public Station,* by James A. Anderson

Focusing on WOUB, Athens, Ohio, this study reports that: telephone collection techniques seem the most productive survey method over face-to-face interview and mail survey. Telephone techniques were logistically simple, returning good quality data with easily effected controls for balanced representation of sample.

IV. *Method Dependent Opinion Leadership: Implications for Ascertainment of Black Community Needs for Public Television Stations,* by Thomas A. McCain, C. Richard Hofstetter, Navita Cummings James, and James E. Hawkins.

With WOSU, Columbus, Ohio, as its focus, this study reports that: differing types of community "opinion leaders" (Key Informants, Social Designates, Self Designates and Volunteers) have differing perceptions of community needs and problems. The study leans toward the Socially Designated opinion leader as the "critical invisible leader of opinion within the community," and says every effort should be made to identify members of this group.

V. *Progress Report on Continuing Ascertainment: Jacksonville and Tallahassee, Florida*, by David J. LeRoy and Bernadette McGuire.

The overall goal of this project was to develop a methodology for obtaining a valid perception of community problems on a continuing basis. Emphasis was placed on developing a procedure that was simple to administer and analyze, minimizing expenditures of staff time and other resources.

VI. *How to Conduct a Cooperative Market-Wide Community Leaders Survey*, by Thomas M. Turner

This is a case study of the experiences of WMVS, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in leading a community ascertainment project for itself and its commercial colleagues in the Milwaukee market. Of special interest are the problems and pitfalls that await a public broadcaster in conducting this kind of project.

The reader should be aware that this volume is a collection of non-technical summaries and that the full studies on which they are based are on file in CPB's Office of Communication Research.

Issues In Ascertaining The Different Needs of Urban and Rural Community Leaders

NON-TECHNICAL REPORT

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March 1977

The purpose of this study was to develop methods for the identification and surveying of community leaders in small, medium and large communities. Questions concerning the relationship between identified problems and community size, and the design and utilization of appropriate research instruments were posed. Six communities within the coverage area of KUED-TV, Utah's statewide public television station were selected for study. The population centers represented one "large," two "medium" and three "small" communities. These six communities not only represented major population divisions, but a range of communities from less than 5,000 to over 150,000, thus providing for comparisons of survey methodologies within the small and medium divisions.

Drawing the Sample

Utilizing the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) "Community Leader Annual Checklist," a total of twenty categories were used to classify the organizations found in the current telephone directories of the six communities selected for this study. The leader of each organization was operationally defined as the chief executive officer, and was the first interview choice. When the designated leader was unavailable, the next highest level officer was selected. The "Other" category was used to provide a greater representation from various elements from within the community on a case by case basis. Generally speaking, the nineteen specified categories were found to be very satisfactory for the communities surveyed. The total sample consisted of one leader from each category for the small communities, two leaders from each for the medium communities, and three leaders from each for the large community for a total of 200.

The Research Instrument

The instrument designed for this study fit on a single 8-½ x 11 inch sheet of paper. By folding the paper in half along the 11 inch side, a four-page (5-½ x 8-½") test booklet was prepared. Page one contained all the information required by the FCC on their "Suggested Leader Contact Form" (except the problems identified by the respondent): date, name and address of person contacted, organization represented by respondent, leader checklist category represented, respondent's position in the organization, time and place of contact, interviewer's name, and method of contact. Page two contained an introductory set of instructions and the master problem checklist. Page three provided for an open-ended expansion of the top five problems cited by the respondent. Page four was blank except for the heading, "Additional Comments." Since a major objective of this project was to develop alternative survey methods for public broadcasters, two forms of the research instrument were developed; one for face-to-face interviews, and a second for telephone interviews. Both forms were identical except for the instructions and checklist format.

Form A: Face-to-Face

The face-to-face instrument instructed the interviewee to select the five most im-

portant problem areas in his or her community. If there were problems in the community not represented by the list, the respondent was encouraged to identify additional problems in the "Other" category. Once the five most pressing problems were chosen, the interviewee was instructed to rank the problems in order of greatest importance, marking the most pressing problem number 1 and the fifth most important problem number 5. The selection of five as the number of problems to be cited was supported by preliminary experiences of the authors gained while completing a pilot study in anticipation of the CPB ascertainment project. Having ranked the top five problems, the respondent would return the questionnaire to the interviewer, who would ask for an explanation of what the respondent meant by the topics selected. Additional statements which might contribute to the survey or assist in future interpretation of the data were recorded on page four. (Form A is presented in Appendix I.)

Form B: Telephone

Early attempts to utilize the face-to-face instrument for telephone interviews proved to be unsatisfactory. Without having the entire list of problems in front of the respondent, the telephone interviewees could not manage the fifteen item list. To correct this shortcoming, a set of seven scales was printed to the right of each item and instructions for using the scales were prepared. Using the ratings of 1 to 7, the interviewer could ask the respondent to put the problems in priority order. That is, by focusing the interviewee's attention on those items rated 7, the researcher would ask the respondent to rank them accordingly, with the most pressing problem receiving a ranking of 1. If less than five items received a rating of 7, the researcher would move to those items rated 6, and so on, until the respondent had identified what he considered to be the top five problem areas. The interviewer would then ask for an explanation of each problem, as was done in the face-to-face interviews.

In an attempt to check possible ordering effects inherent in Form A, the telephone format required that the researcher begin the list at a different point each time. In other words, the alphabetical listing of Form A was altered so that the same order did not reappear in fifteen successive telephone interviews. Every interview afforded an opportunity for the respondent to identify additional problems not adequately covered in the checklist. (Form B is presented in Appendix II.)

Results and Discussion

One of the objectives of this study was to determine if the problems identified by community leaders are a function of community size. Within the limitations of the present investigation, it would appear that community size is a definite contributor to the problems identified. There is a higher correlation among the problems generated at each community level than across the different sized communities. It should be noted, however, that there are problem categories which were of major importance to leaders from all three community levels. Problems associated with "Employment" and "Economic Issues"

were reflected in the top five concerns of leaders in small, medium and large communities.

Perhaps of equal importance to the similarity or dissimilarity of broad problem categories identified by leaders from the three community levels is the finding that interpretations of the problems vary considerably from one community to another. This is true both within and across community levels. Hence, the problem categories greatly facilitate the grouping of data across the entire coverage area, but, at the same time, conceal meaningful differences which result in a problem summary that suggests greater homogeneity than actually exists. However, since station management will be coming into direct contact with community leaders, the specific interpretations which are unique to each community will be obvious to those individuals concerned with programming decisions based upon the ascertainment data. Keeping this in mind, the broad problem categories provide both a convenient and efficient technique for classifying community problems and for summarizing the problems in a form that is representative of the entire broadcast service area.

Although there is little question that the top problems identified in each community were representative of the same major concerns had the study been conducted over a longer time period (thereby more closely approximating the required continuous ascertainment procedure), the agenda-setting function of the local media undoubtedly influenced the specific rankings reported in this study. This factor was especially true for the Salt Lake City (large community) survey. Just a few days before the research team was to begin the scheduled interviews, Congressman Allan Howe was arrested for soliciting sex acts from two female police decoys. This story, and subsequent developments, became a lead news item on the front page of both Salt Lake City dailies and the evening news broadcasts of the three commercial television stations. Respondents' open-ended interpretations of both "Religious and Moral Values" and "Government and Politics" suddenly included direct references to the Allan Howe case. The stability of both of these categories as on-going problem areas is supported by their appearance in the top listings of the open-ended survey and the research instrument pretest. However, one is tempted to speculate as the probable rankings of these two problem categories during a nonelection year when no media attention is given to the moral conduct of Senators and Congressmen.

The experience of using both face-to-face and telephone interviewing techniques (Forms A and B) clearly indicates that both methods can be used in different sized communities with equal effectiveness. The data derived from both instruments were not only similar in content, but comparable in quality and projected usefulness. Although the sample size used in the main portion of this study did not permit separate tabulations by research instrument, the top ranked problem was identical across Forms A and B in all communities where both face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted.

While there is no evidence to suggest that either method is superior at any given community level in terms of information quality, each method has its own procedural advantages. For instance, the face-to-face method encourages the interviewer to meet

with the community leader on his own territory, thus permitting on-location confirmation of the specific problems identified. The in-person visit is appreciated especially by leaders in small rural communities who feel their problems are not usually considered, and who have a genuine interest in informing representatives from the larger metropolitan areas. The face-to-face interview not only provides for additional information about the community, but about the interviewee. Nonverbal cues about the leader, his organization and his level of understanding can be acquired through the in-person interview. On-location visits also facilitate the identification of "invisible" leaders, by chance encounters and personal observations.

The major advantage of the telephone interview is that community leaders from across the broadcast service area can be contacted without the manager ever leaving the television station. If the station has access to a WATS line, the cost of telephone interviewing is minimal and it represents a considerable time saving over the face-to-face visits. Should the leader be busy at the time the telephone interview is initiated, the leaders can return the call at the mutual convenience of both manager and leader.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The local telephone directory can serve as a primary resource in the identification and selection of representative community leaders. The category system utilized in the yellow pages to list community agencies bears a striking resemblance to the categories contained in the FCC's "Community Leader Annual Checklist." Since the telephone directory is updated annually, it tends to be a more reliable source of information than do various directories of community service agencies or public offices, which are revised less frequently.

2. Broadcasters can supplement information gleaned from the telephone directory by asking the visible community leaders to identify other leaders who represent checklist categories for which no formal organizations were found. Using leaders to identify other leaders who, in turn, identify still other leaders is a "snowball technique" which proved to be extremely successful in the present study. Chance encounters with local residents also provide numerous opportunities to acquire "grass root" perceptions as to the identity of less visible community leaders. Informal minorities existing in small communities, such as ethnic groups and senior citizens, will frequently necessitate the utilization of the snowball technique as a means of locating representative spokesmen.

3. The identification of community "information networks" through use of this technique should prove beneficial in sustaining a continuous ascertainment effort throughout the license renewal period. Whereas large metropolitan areas afford a ready sample of leaders who fit all of the FCC's organizational categories, a broad spectrum of community leaders in small towns is much more difficult to find. Here, where a single individual may appear to represent three or more checklist categories, broadcasters must take advantage of every opportunity to extend their list of community leaders. The names of individuals who formerly held specific positions or served on ad hoc committees,

etc., will be of considerable value in maintaining continuous community leader contacts.

4. Community problems are, to some extent, a function of community size. Broadcasters cannot expect to gain a clear impression of the problems in rural communities by restricting their leader survey to metropolitan areas. A high degree of similarity was found to exist across communities of comparable size, but the specific issues and perceptions associated with those problems varied greatly from one community to another. The findings of this study suggest that a wise practice would be to group the different communities within a station's coverage area on the basis of size. These categories could then be used in the preparation of an interview schedule which would insure a representative sampling of leaders from each community level throughout the survey period.

5. The face-to-face and telephone interviewing methods provided information of equal quality at all community levels. Leaders expressed virtually no difficulty in using the "Community Problem Checklist," whether presented in person or over the telephone. The open-ended responses provided useful explanations of the general problem topics, and both methods afforded an opportunity for additional comments about the community or recommendations for station management. The "Other" category was used infrequently, and in no case was this additional information seen by the research team as falling outside the fifteen problem areas provided. However, to facilitate the successful completion of the interview, this information was always treated as an original category and discussed separately during the open-ended expansion of the five problem areas. Since the face-to-face and telephone methods provide comparable information, broadcasters can use each method to its best advantage. The face-to-face interview allows the interviewer to meet the leaders in person, and to gain an increased understanding of problem areas through personal observation. The telephone interview requires less time and effort, is generally less expensive, and can be easily scheduled into a manager's daily routine. Given the FCC's statement that the Commission will accept "a broad range of methods for leader interviews," it is recommended that a combination of the methods used in this study be employed throughout the survey period. In-person visits to the communities provide valuable information which makes later telephone interviews much more meaningful and easier to complete. While an even balance between face-to-face and telephone interviews seems appropriate, a greater dependence upon telephone interviews should not reduce the quality of the leader survey, if the manager is sufficiently familiar with each of the communities represented.

6. The number of leaders needed to provide an adequate sampling for any given community is a function of the community's size, but exactly how many leaders should be surveyed in each case must be left to the best judgment of station management. There is an inverse relationship between community size and leader awareness of a broad spectrum of community issues. That is, as community size increases, community leaders tend to become more myopic and narrow in their perceptions of community problems. Broadcasters who rely on the same list of community leaders, especially in the larger com-

munities, may exclude the identification of major problem areas, or at least minimize the number of alternative interpretations associated with major problem categories.

7. Since a major limitation in the use of a "Community Problem Checklist" is the possible omission of significant community problems, broadcasters must make every effort to insure that the checklist employed is representative of existing problems within the service area. The original instrument designed for use in this project was drawn from problem topics identified within the Salt Lake City metropolitan area during the summer of 1975. These categories were updated and refined on the basis of thirty open-ended telephone interviews. Should a broadcaster decide to utilize the research instruments developed for this study, it is strongly recommended that series of open-ended interviews be conducted to pretest the appropriateness of the problem categories for the service area in question. It should also be determined whether or not the sample issues listed with each problem topic should be rewritten, expanded or eliminated entirely. Although the sample issues used in this study apparently assisted community leaders in the identification of problem areas, and hence provided a point of departure for the open-ended discussions, it is not known if the research instruments contributed to a systematic exclusion of other interpretations. It should also be remembered that the fifteen problem categories are not intended to be mutually exclusive. Quite to the contrary, different individuals may associate the same specific issue with different problem categories, but these fluctuations will tend to balance out, thus permitting the most important problems to be revealed.

8. Since the FCC permits up to 50 per cent of the community leader interviews by license renewal applicants to be conducted by non-management personnel, film and television production crews doing on-location production might contribute to a station's ascertainment effort. With adequate preparation and advance interview scheduling, production crew members could easily complete as many as ten face-to-face interviews during a one-day period in communities located nearby or enroute to/from the production site. Utilizing crew members in this fashion serves the dual purpose of reducing the manager's ascertainment burden and promoting the station's image by briefing community leaders on programs being produced in their own community or geographical region. It also has the obvious benefit of bringing lower level station personnel in direct touch with important community problems and local contacts who might contribute to the future treatment of those problems.

9. An important question not totally answered by this study concerns the extent to which community problems should be included in a station's "Problems-Programs List" on the basis of considerations other than frequency of mention and/or repeatedly high rankings by leaders. Using a community problem checklist minimizes the frustration associated with attempting to summarize a wide range of open-ended responses which contain both specific issues and broad problem areas. By making a simple frequency count of problem topics for selected communities within a station's service area, the manager can either pool the data into a single composite listing, or draw conclusions

on the basis of the different sized communities within the sample. Yet, the collapsing of information required by such procedures necessarily excludes the less frequently identified problems in the sample. Here the broadcaster is forced to make certain subjective judgments about the possible importance of problems which appear, from a strictly quantitative standpoint, to be of little significance. Only through a thorough understanding of the different communities within the broadcast service area can management make intelligent decisions regarding the most important community problems.

10. While it is true that community leaders typically represent a range of vested interests which have a definite impact on leader's interpretations of community problems, the required survey of these leaders appears justified. The ascertainment of community leaders does result in a more meaningful understanding of the problems which exist throughout a public television station's coverage area. Meeting the ascertainment obligation should do more than help a broadcaster qualify for a three-year license renewal.

Appendix I
COMMUNITY PROBLEM CHECKLIST FORM A: FACE TO FACE

Leader Contact Form

Date: _____

Name & Address of person contacted: _____

_____

Organization represented by person contacted: _____

_____

Checklist category represented: _____

_____

Interviewee's position in organization: _____

_____

Date, time, place of contact: _____

_____

Face-to-face ( )

Interviewer Name _____

Telephone ( )

Community Problem Checklist Form A

Instructions: Select the 5 (five) areas you consider to be the most important problems in your community. Rank the problems selected in order of greatest importance, marking the most pressing problem number 1 and the fifth most important problem number 5. Suggested issues, which might be associated with the general problem areas, are presented to help in the identification of community problems.

Crime (increase in burglaries, shoplifting)
Economic Issues (inflation, taxes, fixed income)
Education and Culture (better schools, performing arts, libraries)
Employment (more jobs for adults, young people)
Environmental (ecology, energy, pollution, flood control)
Government and Poltics (corruption, bigness, need for citizen action)
Health and Medical Care (cost of services, limited facilities)
Housing (few low income homes, problem landlords)
Law Enforcement (more assistance for police and courts)
Legal Protection (legal aid, consumer assistance)
Needs of Women & Minorities (discrimination, equal opportunity)
Planning and Zoning (more recreation areas, residential protection)
Population Growth (need for population planning, urban sprawl)
Religious and Moral Values (qualities, attitudes, etc.)
Transportation (congestion, rapid mass transit)
Other

Open ended Expansion on Five Problem Areas

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

Appendix II
COMMUNITY PROBLEM CHECKLIST FORM B: TELEPHONE

Leader Contact Form

Date: _____

Name & Address of person contacted: _____

_____

Organization represented by person: _____

_____

Interviewee's position in organization: _____

_____

Date, time, place of contact: _____

_____

Face to face ( )

Interviewer Name _____

Telephone ( )

Community Problem Check List Form B

Instructions: Hello, I'm. . . . I am going to read you a list of fifteen potential problem areas. For each problem, I'd like you to rank on a scale of one to seven the degree of concern this problem is to you in your community. To mark a 1 indicates a problem of little concern. To mark a 7 indicates a problem of great concern. To mark midway would indicate that the problem is of moderate concern to you in your community. For example, for a farmer with no irrigation, lack of rainfall would be a problem of great concern. Hence he would rate it 7. If he had irrigation equipment, the problem may be of moderate concern, and he would mark 4. Please feel free to use the entire range of numbers from 1 to 7.

	Little Great
Crime (increase in burglaries, shoplifting)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Economic Issues (inflation, taxes, fixed income)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Education and Culture (better schools, performing arts, libraries)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Employment (more jobs for adults, young people)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Environmental (ecology, energy, pollution, flood control)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Government and Politics (corruption, bigness, need for citizen action)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Health and Medical Care (cost of services, limited facilities)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Housing (few low income houses, problem landlords)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Law Enforcement (more assistance for police and courts)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Legal Protection (legal aid, consumer assistance)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Needs for Women and Minorities (discrimination, equal opportunities)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Planning, Zoning (more recreation areas, residential protection)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Population Growth (need for population planning, urban sprawl)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Religious and Moral Values (quality, attitudes, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Transportation (congestion, rapid mass transit)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Other	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Open ended Expansion on Five Problem Areas

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

Volunteer Ascertainment Panels

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Patrick A. Nester
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February 21, 1977

Introduction

The special interests of this study are:

a. Tests of the efficacy of different ways of using volunteers
b. Using hierarchies of panels
c. Using self-anchoring communities
d. Specific findings for Austin and San Antonio
e. Suggestions for implementation and application elsewhere

We polled a representative and substantial sample of more than 1,000 people in these two cities and asked them about needs and interests. The polling was done by volunteers. We used volunteers one way in Austin and another way in San Antonio. We asked each of the respondents in our poll to specify how he wanted to be identified, whether he thought of himself primarily by age group, sex, ethnic group, or whatever he specified and chose. These were our self-anchoring subcommunities. The respondents in each of these subcommunities formed the first level panel which was simply a statistical aggregate. We summarized the results of each of these panels and had them synthesized and interpreted by a second level panel consisting of leaders of these subgroups as identified by other leaders. A third level panel includes station management and general community leaders. It evaluates the extent to which both local and network programming are responsive to the needs identified by the poll and lower panels. One of the primary goals of this study was to develop a procedure that could be readily integrated into the ordinary operations of broadcasters. Special uses of volunteers, of self-anchoring communities, and hierarchies of panels appear to fulfill this need.

Using Volunteers in General

The key to effective, low cost ascertainment is to integrate it into the day-to-day operations of the station. Moreover, one way to minimize costs is to make use of unpaid volunteers. Most noncommercial stations are likely to use them in substantial numbers anyway. They use volunteers to man telephones or perform other tasks at various fund-raising activities such as on-the-air auctions, call-in membership drives, and telethons. Since so many ascertainment requirements can be fulfilled by telephone surveys of the public and of community leaders, extending the work schedule of fund-raising volunteers to include a few hours of additional telephoning is very worthwhile. Broadcasters affiliated with universities can provide a genuine educational opportunity for student volunteers studying research methods, broadcast station management, communications, law and public policy. The polling of community leaders can be an extended process, lasting months or even years. It thus fulfills the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) requirement of continuous ascertainment. Volunteers who have limited free time, say one afternoon per week, for extended periods may be used for this part of the ascertainment process.

The community leaders themselves are also volunteers in this ascertainment process. The FCC requires at least 50 per cent of community leader interviews to be con-

ducted by station managers or principals. Such interviews can be conducted in small group panels of three to five persons. The theme for such a panel may be a "blueprint for progress" or "checklist for tomorrow." This lets them discuss the problems and needs of the community, and it can constitute public service programming that is directly responsive to the needs of the community. Leaders of various interest groups like to discuss their concerns on the air. Group sessions also save time. Compared to one-on-one interviews, the economy of this format is enormous. Even ongoing news or public affairs programming may be adapted to this end. Station managers or principals may be invited to appear as guest hosts along with the normal announcer to interview a distinguished panel.

Volunteers in Austin and San Antonio

We used volunteers one way in Austin and another way in San Antonio. We found that volunteer interviewers were successful when the station recruited them specifically for interviewing, but that these volunteers were unsuccessful if they were recruited to work primarily at the fund-raising auction at the same time. Using volunteers to make calls proved unworkable when they had gone to the studio for another purpose, but when they originally volunteer to interview, they performed well and enjoyed the calling.

In San Antonio the volunteers made the telephone interviews for the poll during the fund-raising auction. These volunteers arrived at the station in groups as part of a community organization project. They left immediately after their period of taking bids. Making the calls distracted the volunteers from enjoying the evening. The station's priority was fund raising. During the auction, the volunteers could not make calls while they were on camera. Nor could they use phone lines to make the calls because the lines had to be kept open to receive bids. The interviews obtained in this manner also showed that training the volunteers took too much time for the process to be efficient. In all, this method yielded fewer than 30 completed questionnaires in San Antonio.

In Austin the interviews were conducted after the entire auction was over. The telephones were left in the studio for several days and the station director of volunteers recruited enough volunteers, mainly among seniors in high schools, to staff the phones for four evenings. These volunteers completed six to eight calls each in two hours or 25 calls in four nights. After we had to yield the 30 lines made available to us, we completed the rest of the calls in the Center for Communication Research.

Before they made any calls, the volunteers read the questionnaires and answered the questions themselves. During the interviewing sessions, volunteers were able to discuss the problems of recording responses with a member of our staff. Volunteers were able to ask questions immediately after the call was completed while the conversation was fresh. From the open-ended questions the interviewers recorded the principal phrases of the response.

The method for both San Antonio and Austin began by using a random process to select numbers from phone books. Then the interviewers filled out the questionnaires

during the phone interviews. Workers called enough numbers to insure having enough important subgroups such as minorities in the sample. This meant we needed a sample of at least 1,000 in order to have subsamples of older male Blacks, poor female Whites, and all the others of adequate statistical size.

Hierarchies of Panels

The second innovation in our method was the hierarchy of panels. We used three sets of panels. The first was a statistical aggregate. Each of the panels in this set consisted of the various sub-sets of our sample in which people were grouped by the answers they gave to the questions about which groups they identified with most, second most, and third most. The second set of panels interpreted the results from the first set. The findings from the polls of the Mexican-American community were reviewed by Mexican-American leaders, the polling results among the aged by the aged.

The interests of the various sub-communities must also be ranked in order of priority among one another. The most urgent need of the Chicanos and of the aged may not coincide, and yet must be incorporated in an overall view. This is the job of the synthesizing panels. In accordance with FCC guidelines requiring station management to select those community needs to which the station will address itself most directly, the synthesizing panels help to make this selection.

The interpreting panelists did not all agree with one another in their evaluations of the results of the polls. After presenting the evaluating panelists with the data on national and world-wide needs as reported by the respondents to our polls, some agreed with the collective statements of the groups, and some disagreed. For example, 37.2 per cent of the people in Austin said that love, kindness, understanding, and peace were the most important national or world-wide needs, while 13.9 per cent regarded economic conditions to be most important, and another 13.9 per cent regarded better government and leadership to be most important. Of the intermediate panelists, 90 per cent agreed with these results, while 10 per cent disagreed with them. Some of the panelists were either impressed or surprised by the data, and one thought the results were nebulous. The intermediate panelists for San Antonio were equally divided. Most agreed wholly with the results, and thought we could put complete faith in our data, but some thought that the percentages for San Antonio were somewhat off the mark. Generally we learn that expert panels of active community leaders reported that the results appeared reasonable according to their perceptions. But we also learned that this process of ascertainment does not yield unanimity.

The questions asked of panels of community leaders came from the summaries of the survey results. These questions concerned reactions to the perceptions of important needs. Each community panel contained about 30 individuals in leadership positions. The prospective panelists received letters specifying the purposes of the research project, the reason the person had been chosen, a promise not to be identified by name or occupation, as well as being informed that a staff member from the Center would call

within two weeks during business hours. With the letter the leaders received a summary of the findings of the survey and a copy of the questions the Center's interviewer would ask. This allowed the respondent to consider the issues before the interview.

Completing the phone calls proved fairly difficult. Community leaders were busy and the phone interviews required two weeks to complete. Sixty phone interviews of a random selection of citizens would usually require not more than 12 to 15 hours of phoning. Trying to reach the leaders in a short period was made more difficult by respondents who were away on business trips, kept several offices and were hard to reach at any one, or had full schedules.

The hierarchy of panels adopted by this study is a technique that makes maximum use of volunteers and uses a minimum of station resources. The method is efficient, easy to administer, and inexpensive. It meets FCC requirements, and generates extensive information of interest to producers, news-persons, and researchers not concerned with ascertainment.

The Self-Anchored Communities

When one is asked about "the needs of the community," one is confronted with an oceanic phrase awash with ambiguity. Those who have not picked up the argot of the issue-world do not respond at all, or their response seems uninformed, even incoherent. The solution to this problem of uninteresting and virtually useless ascertainment responses lies in a rethinking of the concept of "community." One cannot discover community needs without having clearly in view which community is under scrutiny. Every major metropolitan area is composed of countless sub-communities.

Every individual identifies himself with one or more of these sub-communities. If asked to rank-order the groups to which we belong according to their importance to our lives and values, few of us would begin the list by identifying ourselves as a resident of a particular city. We might identify ourselves by occupation or religion or with relations to a family group, but probably not by city. Yet cities and towns, for the most part, are the communities with which ascertainment procedures deal.

We empirically identified the communities of interest within the service area. When the respondent is asked about the needs of his community, it is clear to him and to us which community exactly is under review. Thus our ascertainment model turns on a "self-anchoring" notion of community. Only to the extent that a respondent can first specify his communities of interest can he make any competent statement about their needs.

Our approach contrasts distinctly with the usual techniques of identifying respondents by census categories. This study is less interested in whether the respondent happens to be Black, makes less than $20,000, and has five children, although this information may be potentially valuable in statistical correlations with patterns of perceived needs. Information about the hidden communities of interest within a service area, as well as the thoroughly publicized "issue" communities, provides a station manager or pro-

ducer with a broader range of options from which to construct a programming format. It was difficult to develop questions to elicit response categories that matched the perceptions of the respondents. In trying to discover what groups residents identified with and how they defined themselves, we learned that respondents used widely differing meanings for words such as "race," "Chicano," and "Anglo."

We generally found that 56 per cent of the people in San Antonio listed the family as the group of first identification for them. In Austin, however, only 28 per cent of the people identified family as their most important group. Much of this may be accounted for by the great number of college students in Austin. These differences between cities, as well as differences within each city in which group is most important for the individual, affects the kinds of problems that are listed as most important and the kinds of television programming of greatest interest to that group. There is a significant and substantial correlation, for example, between listing the family as the most important group and believing that television can solve local and community needs. When religious groups are regarded to be most important, there is a good correlation with the belief that television cannot solve needs. When, as in Austin, religious groups are more often listed as primary groups of identification than family groups, this correlates with the importance placed on economics and planning as principal community needs. In the same way, when a respondent identifies most with his family, television is his most important source of news, but if family is not his most important reference group then newspapers are a much more important source of news than television. It seems that newspapers are for the isolated while television is for more family and socially oriented people.

Specific Findings

In Austin, 22 per cent of the White respondents said the major need of the community is economic, including high rates of utilities and of unemployment. Another 21 per cent of the White respondents identified planning and designed for the future growth of the community as principal needs. In contrast, some 31 per cent of the Blacks of the Austin sample answered that better interpersonal and intergroup relationships are the most important needs. Other Blacks in Austin gave priority to the planning and design for growth. For Mexican-Americans, two of the most important issues were planning (27 per cent) and economics (20 per cent).

In San Antonio we found no significant difference in the perceptions of community needs among Whites and Non-Whites, among young and old. There was much greater agreement. Nearly 33 per cent of the San Antonio sample indicated that the general economic situation including unemployment, high utility rates, and taxes were the greatest immediate concern. Planning and control of the city was identified as the most important community need by 24 per cent of the respondents. Some 14 per cent of the San Antonio sample indicated crime as the pressing issue for their neighborhood and community as a whole. Naturally, all of these responses were to open-ended questions.

In San Antonio, 27 per cent of the respondents largely depend upon television, 49 per cent on newspapers, and 2 per cent on social contacts for their sources of information. When asked whether television could help meet the problems of San Antonio, about 72 per cent of the total respondents said yes while 19 per cent were doubtful. To define the nature of television's role more precisely, we asked, "Which needs can television meet?" Three roles were identified: public issue awareness (20 per cent); advertisement (42 per cent); and diffusion of information (18 per cent).

Finally about 43 per cent of the San Antonio respondents described public broadcasting as educational. Another 17 per cent of the sample answered pleasing and good programming in general when asked for their image of KLRN—Channel 9. Nevertheless, 27 per cent of the viewers were unable to get that channel. In the Black community, 44 per cent of the people cannot get that channel or watch it.

In Austin, 24 per cent answered that communication was the single most important need in the city or neighborhood while 23 per cent said government, and 19 per cent said the economy. In contrast, Blacks in Austin put better public service and communication in equal frequencies. Even though 14 per cent of all the people said better communication is the way to meet community needs, the general consensus is that the improvement of the general economy will do more than anything else. The people's expectations of KLRN was half the time one of educational programs, while 23 per cent said pleasing and good programs in a broad sense. Again, however, about 21 per cent of the whole Austin sample was unable to get KLRN, and it is also apparent that about half the Black community and lower income respondents are unable to get the channel or are not interested because of the poor reception. Only a simple sample of findings can be presented in the limited space available.

Suggestions for Implementation and Application

The legal bases for the FCC ascertainment are much narrower than the scope and content of the ascertainment procedures that have to be used. The issues are broader in at least four ways. First, many of the most pressing needs of local communities are national issues. Unemployment, inflation, and a limp morale are seldom endemic and in quarantine. Second, no community ends at the city limits. Third, TV stations are not only distributors of programs but also producers of programs. Some productions, such as local news, are for local distribution only, but there are other programs which are produced for potentially national distribution. Finally, no ascertainment of community needs can be turned into programs to meet those needs without also ascertaining the resources available to the station. The issues are also broader than the ascertainment procedures that have to be used because ascertainment also involves the action that the station takes on the basis of the information gathered.

More specifically, however, we learned that the ascertainment methods of using volunteers, hierarchies of panels, and self-anchoring sub-communities meet the real needs of ascertainment and are most feasible. Volunteers can perform telephone inter-

views as a part of studying community needs. An ascertainment program that depends on volunteers does require planning and coordination, just as the auctions and memberships drives do. We found that volunteers could perform the interviewing and coding of the questionnaires. They would have difficulty planning the questions, designing the coding instructions, and tabulating the data, but some of the summarizing of the data could also be performed by these volunteers. Most of the time for the project can be performed by volunteers with little or no research experience. Through working with the station and volunteers we feel the station can integrate the ascertainment process into its normal fund-raising and public relations programs.

Ascertainment Collection Methods For The Rural Public Station

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Introduction

This paper reports the results of a search for optimum methods of ascertainment of community needs in geographically widespread but sparsely populated areas. It is intended in the interest of regional public stations who share with commercial stations the ascertainment obligation.

Statement of the Problem

Public television stations serving predominately rural regions face a number of problems in the ascertainment process. To begin with, there is the problem of defining the community to be ascertained. We are directed by the primer to the "community of license." That community may well be a small town among many such towns each operating in quasi-independence within the larger region of service. To place primary emphasis on one small town would only result in a denigration of service directed toward the larger, and logically more important, regional concerns. Shifting more emphasis to regional concerns while maintaining specific interest in the city of license strikes a better balance.

Defining the community this way, however, raises formidable obstacles to the collection of data. Assuming a service radius of even 50 miles presents a data collection territory of almost 8,000 square miles. Adding another 25 miles will more than double that territory to over 17,000 square miles. Given rural population characteristics of widespread dispersal and only small areas of concentration, the simple selection of respondent households for random or quota sampling becomes exceedingly complex.

Finally, rural areas composed of many small towns present no primary locus for the identification of regional problems. Regional problems occur in the interaction (or lack of it) of these many quasi-independent communities. Each community presents only its own point of view yet all are important.[1] Consequently, a thorough review of the problem of this "community" places a heavy burden on regional public stations.

Procedures

Collection Techniques

Three major survey methods were used in this comparative study: the face-to-face interviews, the telephone interview, and the mail survey. Two variations of the telephone interview, as well as three distinct types of mailings were conducted. These techniques are described below.

The face-to-face interviews were of the intercept type. Trained interviewers were strategically placed in areas of high pedestrian traffic, and were instructed to interview each passerby. Adept interviewers completed 12-15 questionnaires per hour. It

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[1] *Even the smaller communities as larger ones generally pose more problems for the smaller than the reverse.*

should be noted here that the scheduled personal interview was rejected because the researcher had found in previous studies, this process to be too costly.

Two methods of telephone contact were used. In the first, the interview was conducted through a single telephone contact; in the second, a cover letter and a copy of the questionnaire were sent to the respondent 14 days prior to the telephone contact. The recipient was informed that he/she might return the completed questionnaire by mail, or if preferred, that he/she might wait for the interviewer's follow-up telephone call.

The three types of mailing used were: (1) a blind mail-out with no follow-up (hereinafter referred to as mail-only), (2) a blind mail-out with a token reward (mail-incentive), and (3) a mail-out in response to respondent request. This method was deemed impractical because two weeks of intensive spot advertising announcing the availability of these questionnaires generated only 13 requests. This method, therefore, was dropped from further analysis.

Questionnaires

Following guidelines set forth in the CPB handbook, the questionnaire was divided roughly into three parts: (1) an open-ended question which directed the respondent to identify community problems, (2) a series of force-choice ("yes", "no", "don't know") questions posing possible issues as problems relevant to the community, and (3) a series of demographic-oriented questions.

The same questions were, in slightly different forms, used with each mode of information solicitation.

Subjects for the intercept interviews were obtained through location sampling. The locations chosen were business districts and shopping malls where members of the surrounding

erated from published telephone directories. Telephone lists provided the only comprehensive list of residents across the four counties sampled.

Each of the four counties sampled supplied a total of 300 respondents, 100 per county through intercept methods, and 50 for each of the other four methods.

Results

The results of this study of comparative solicitation procedures were analyzed over four factors: (1) Rate of return, (2) Cost per unit returned, (3) Quality of data returned, and (4) Representativeness of returned sample.

Analysis of Rate of Return

This analysis clearly demonstrates the superiority of the telephone and intercept methods over the blind mailings. The telephone methods yielded a return of about 86 per cent; intercept interviews, about 80 per cent, and mailing techniques, about 25 per cent.

Cost per Unit Returned

Out-of-Pocket costs per unit were analyzed. This investigation deleted the director's salary as well as fixed costs (space, utilities, etc.) as these would likely be covered out or ordinary operating funds.

It is important to note that there was a direct relationship between total costs and rate of return. The intercept interview, then, which was highest in cost, was also the highest in return. Further, as rate of return increased, costs, while also increasing, did not increase as fast. On this basis, the interview was deemed the most economic method with a cost per unit returned of $3.98. Telephone cost per unit returned averaged $5.15, and mail, $6.98.

Quality of Data Returned – Open-ended Questions

Quality of returned data for the open-ended questions was defined in terms of the number of respondents identifying problems and the number of multiple responses given. It was found that respondents queried through intercept interviews were more likely to identify at least one community problem; those responding via telephone were least likely. Mail treatments generated the highest percentage of multiple responses, intercept treatments, the lowest, with telephone intermediate. No single method was superior, then, on both counts of quality for open-ended questions.

Quality of Data Returned – Forced-Choice

The mail, intercept, and telephone-only treatments were analyzed across each of the force-choice items to determine whether the method of data collection systematically affected the number of problem linkages (problems identified) and the number of low information responses (no answeres or "don't know"). Analyses suggested that the collection effect was dependent on the content of the item. For example, better than 60 per cent of the mail survey respondents considered crime a problem, but 60 per cent of the individuals from the same area surveyed by telephone did not. Nevertheless, it does appear that the mail treatment generates a higher proportion of "don't know" responses than either telephone or intercept. In addition, it appears that the telephone treatment generates fewer "yes" responses than either the intercept or the mail.

Representativeness of Returned Sample

Each of the three major types of collection methods (mail, intercept, telephone) were analyzed over race, age, and sex to determine the degree of representativeness of the total sample returned by the given method. The mail sample was within limits on race. It over-represented the 50-69 age groups and under-represented the 18-29 year old group. It also over-represented males. This last aspect can be explained by the fact that telephone directories tend to list the senior male of each given household. The telephone survey, on the other hand, was within limits on all age groups, but greatly over-repre-

sented females, which was probably a function of a female sex-role in the home. The intercept interview was within expected proportions on males and females; it over-represented the 18-29 age groups and under-represented the over 70 group. These results are in keeping with age-related behavior patterns: the young "go out" more than do the old. (Both the intercept and the telephone surveys over-represented the non-white group according to 1970 census statistics. This finding was explained by the relatively recent demographic changes in the university population included in the sample pool.)

The representation problems cited in this study can easily be controlled through the establishment of quotas for sex in address labeling and in telephone interviewing, and respondent selection in the intercept interviews.

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

This study examined data collection techniques and two sampling methods. The five collection techniques were: (1) mail-only—a blind mail-out with no follow-up; (2) mail incentive—a blind mail-out with a token (10¢) incentive and no follow-up; (3) telephone only—a telephone interview completed on first contacts; (4) mail-telephone—a telephone interview preceeded by a mailing of cover letter and a copy of the questionnaire which could be returned by mail to cancel the call; and (5) the intercept—interviews conducted "on the street" or in shopping centers. The two sampling methods were sampling from telephone directories for the mail and telephone collection treatments and location sampling for the intercept interviews. The data returned by these techniques and methods were examined for rate of return, relative costs, quality of the data *vis a vis* ascertainment requirements and representiveness of the returned sample.

Conclusions

From the finding reported in this study, the following conclusions would appear warranted:

(1) Mail collection procedures appear to be the least efficient in terms of time and money but the small quantity of data returned appears to be of high quality when open-ended items are used. The very low rate of return and increasing postal expenses do not recommend their use, however.

(2) The intercept interview was found to be of highest efficiency in terms of time, money, and rate of return. Controls need to be instituted to avoid over-representation of youth and under-representation of senior adults. Data from the interviews were of good quality except that they lacked depth, generating fewer multiple responses. Availability of suitable locations and weather conditions are clearly limiting factors. Nevertheless, the intercept interview was found to be a useful method.

(3) Telephone collection methods were found to be of good efficiency. Controls over male/female ratio need to be exercised, and rates of telephone and unlisted numbers

considered. Pre-mailing a questionnaire to telephone respondents appears to improve the quality of open-minded responses, but to lessen definitiveness of force-choice items. As the value of open-ended items appears higher in the ascertainment process, pre-mailing should be considered. In general, telephone collection techniques are logistically simple, return good quality data and with easily effected controls have good representiveness. Such methods have our recommendations.

Method Dependent Opinion Leadership: Implications for Ascertainment of Black Community Needs for Public Television Stations

A Non-Technical Summary

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The purpose of this research was to evaluate procedures and methods for soliciting and evaluating the problems, interests and needs of the Black community as an important element in the ascertainment process. The particular concern was in assessing the similarities and differences of the problems, interests and needs articulated by visible and "invisible" opinion leaders within the Black community of Columbus, Ohio. The research focues on methodological issues related to the operationalization of two key concepts of particular importance for ascertainment. These concepts were community problems and community leaders.

Community/Opinion Leaders

Opinion leaders are those members of a social system that other members go to for advice on specific topics. The argument for ascertainment purposes is that identifying and talking to the leaders of community opinion, will enable the public broadcaster to get a sensitive and reliable picture of the problems of the community.

The Commission has prescribed a procedure, whereby responsible spokespersons representing organized groups in the community can be identified and contacted. The community leader checklist provides 19 elements or groups which are of concern to local communities. The Commission argues tnat the local broadcaster, by identifying and interviewing leaders for these groups, will be able to receive a composite picture of the problems, interests, and needs of the community (Report and Order, 1976).

Studies dealing with opinion leadership have traditionally used one of three methods for identifying opinion leaders: (1) self designation; (2) social designation; and (3) key informant designation (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971).

Self-designated opinion leaders are those members of the community who perceive themselves to be sources of influence more so than their friends or other members of their community. The method used to identify self-designated opinion leaders is a series of self report questionnaire items.

Socially-designated opinion leaders are persons identified by the members of a community as "the person(s) you usually go to when you need advice or information on a community problem." Identifying socially-designated opinion leaders requires a general survey of a community, and the subsequent interviewing of the persons the general survey respondents viewed as their opinion leaders.

The key informant opinion leaders are those persons named by visible leaders in the community as the people in the community who are community leaders on a variety of topics. The Commission's community leader checklist is a key informant method for identifying opinion leaders. This technique utilizes the stations of license with help from other local broadcasters, the United Way, Chamber of Commerce, etc., to identify leaders of groups which represent the 19 elements on the checklist. The leaders of established groups are then interviewed. The key informant technique is the method advocated by the ascertainment primer.

The underlying assumption of the opinion leader methods is that an opinion leader is

an identifiable member of a system who can be identified equally well by any of the three methods. However, in studies where two or three of the methods have been used, only moderate to low correlations have been found among the methods (Troldahl and Von Dam, 1965; Blanton, *et al*, 1971; Rogers and Cartano, 1962; Book, 1975).

What appears to have happened in nearly all these studies is a differentiation between visible community leaders identified through the key informant method, and "visible" leaders of opinion in the community identified through the key informant method, and "invisible" leaders of opinion in the community identified by the other methods.

Actual patterns of influence in most American communities are usually more complex than the formal institutions of government or organized groups would suggest (see Dahl, 1961; Dahl, 1967). Granted, politicians and visible leaders of organized groups generally play some role in influencing life in a community and its communications systems. But large numbers of groups and individuals each with somewhat different skills, resources, and interests, are also involved in social, economic, and political affairs within most communities.

The problem of ascertaining community needs of the Black community, or any other system must be sensitive to the response bias of the method employed.

Community Problems

The difficulty of defining what constitutes a community problem has been an issue of much debate in the public opinion literature for some time. Essentially the issue of importance for ascertainment is both philosophical and pragmatic. The broadcaster and the Commission both would like to identify problems of the community so that the community's problems, interests and needs can be raised to a point of discussion and potential solution.

The community's problems have been traditionally identified by asking community leaders and a general sample of the population to identify the "problems of the community." Both open-ended questions and "master problem lists" have been employed in order to determine a list of significant community problems.

It can be argued that the problems, interests and needs of a community may not necessarily be the problems people perceive the *community* to have. Rather, community problems may be more appropriately determined by identifying the clusters of common problems which face the individual members of the community *personally*. It occurred to us that the "problems" community governments and organizations face may be quite different than the problems faced by individuals of the community on a daily basis. "Community" problems of drugs, alcohol, crime, etc., are people's *solutions* to problems, albeit socially unacceptable solutions. Perhaps, by allowing individuals to identify their personal problems, broadcasters could determine clusters of concerns shared by people within the community. Such communalities of personal problems may point a broadcaster in different directions, than would "community problems" identified by the same individuals.

The research question which guided our investigation was:

1. What are the distinguishing characteristics of four method-dependent opinion leadership types for the Black community in Columbus, Ohio according to:
   A. their perception of community and personal problems
   B. their media and communication patterns
   C. their social and demographic characterisitcs

Methodology

Questionnaire

The questionnaire underwent several drafts and was pretested by experienced interviewers.

A series of open-ended questions asked respondents to identify the three most important problems facing the Black community in Columbus. Each of the problems so identified were then rated as to their perceived importance. Subjects were also asked to identify the two most important problems "facing you personally." Each of the personal problems so identified were rated according to their importance. Based on interviews with Blacks working on the project and modified by the pretest, a series of 16 closed-ended problems were also included. These problems included police and discrimination issues as well as social and economic concerns. The problems were rated by respondents on a four point importance scale.

We asked the respondents to identify who they perceive the "most important leaders of the community" to be, as well as how often they interacted with these community leaders and sought their advice about community problems.

Two questions asked respondents to identify their most important source of information for (1) community problems; (2) personal problems. We also asked what the respondents thought television could do to "help solve problems in the Black community."

A series of six questions were employed to identify and evaluate the degree to which respondents had interacted with the local television stations.

Respondents were also asked to specify their radio, newspaper and general television exposure. A series of five questions, adapted from Trohdal and Van Dam (1965) were utilized to determine the degree to which the respondents perceived themselves to be opinion leaders.

Standard social and demographic indicators were employed. Respondents were asked how long they had lived in the community, their age and educational attainment. The respondents' sex was also recorded. Length of residence was observed to indicate social integration into the community, and less directly, knowledge of various social and political aspects of life in the Columbus Black community. Age, education, and sex were assumed to be basic achieved and ascribed social characteristics that define social statuses and life styles.

Finally, the respondents were asked to identify "the people you usually go to when you need advice on a community problem."

Sample

A rather complex sampling procedure was necessitated in order to determine opinion leader types within the Black community.

A general survey was designed to represent a cross-section of all Black adults who resided in the sections of Columbus, Ohio, which included most of the Black population. Two samples were drawn. The first was comprised of those who resided in the 1970 Census tracts in which 50 per cent or more of the population was Black. A second sample was drawn from the 1970 Census tracts in which 12.5 to 50 per cent of the population was Black.

A sample of addresses was drawn from each group of Census tracts separately. Addresses were drawn in serial fashion by computer from a listing of all addresses in each Census tract arrayed by street. The number of addresses in each group was proportional to the number of Black people who resided in each group. Telephone numbers associated with each address were listed. Interviewers were instructed to contact the man or woman of the household for households in which Black people resided (Whites were exluded by asking a filter question at the beginning of each interview). The sample was stratified by sex to be representative, although women were overrepresented in the final results to some extent.

Thus, the sample for the general survey is comprised of an area sample of Black residents in each group of Census tracts. It should present a fairly accurate portrait of the attitudes of Black people in Columbus within the limits specified above. Interviews were completed by 449 respondents.

Self-Designated Leaders

The self-designated opinion leaders were identified according to their responses to the five questions in the questionnaire which had been included specifically for that purpose. The scores for the questions were reflected so that direction was consistent and the 134 persons with the highest scores were labeled self-designated opinion leaders.

Socially-Designated Opinion Leaders

The social designates were people identified by respondents of the general survey. The last item of the questionnaire asked "Who are the people you usually go to when you need advice on a community problem?" The names and addresses and phone numbers of the people designated in this fashion by the general sample were tracked down. Of the 266 different names given by the sample respondents, 192 were identified as to address and phone number, and 115 completed the interview.

Key Informant Opinion Leaders

The key informants or visible leaders were identified by professional Blacks working in both Black and White media organizations. Specifically Blacks from two commercial

television stations, two Black newspapers, and one Black radio station were contacted and responded.

The five media sources were contacted and personally interviewed between May 24 and June 10, 1976. The newspersons were shown the "community leader checklist" and asked to identify Black leaders in as many categories as they were able. The media Blacks identified 84 Key Informants, of which 74 were interviewed.

Volunteer Opinion Leaders

Because the Commission had noted that chance encounters and persons who call stations could also be used as a source of information for ascertainment, this fourth group of "opinion leaders" was identified. WOSU-TV aired spot announcements preceding and following their Black-oriented programs for two weeks (June 12-25, 1976). The spots asked Black viewers to call in and leave their names if they wished to be interviewed concerning problems of the Black community. Thirty-four persons responded, all were interviewed.

Data Collection

Interviewing for all samples was conducted between June 16 and August 7, 1976. The same questionnaire was utilized for all groups, however the introductions used for the various groups was changed.

The interviews were conducted on the telephone by trained Black interviewers who worked primarily in their houses.

Data Analysis

The primary interest in data analysis were the differences between the method-dependent opinion-leader types, and the questionnaire responses. Because of the complex sampling frame and the presence of opinion leader types identified under varying conditions, statistical significance between the groups is difficult to assess.

Unless otherwise indicated, the results presented were significant beyond the .05 level, using a chi square test of significance. It should be noted that the chi squares should be interpreted with some caution due to the potential lack of independence between the groups of opinion leaders, as well as the fact that opinion leader types may not have been drawn from the same population.

Results/Conclusions

Several conclusions appear warranted from the findings of the data analysis.

1. *Opinion leader types appear to be fairly independent of one another.* The four methods used to identify opinion leaders (Key Informants, Social Designates, Self Designates, and Volunteers) revealed different people. This is an especially important finding considering the community under study was the Black community of Columbus. Smaller minority communities are traditionally more integrated than are larger populations.

The fact that the Blacks employed in the local media identified different people as leaders of opinion in the community than were identified by a sample of the community residents, indicates that care should be used in relying exclusively on this technique. When the sample respondents were asked to specify the leaders of the Black community, again the general sample tended to name different Black leaders than the Black media personnel. People perceive different people to be both community and opinion leaders, depending on whom you ask, and how you ask the question.

This in and of itself would not be undesirable for ascertainment purposes if the representative opinion and community leaders identified under varying conditions had similar perceptions of the community and its problems. The data collected in this investigation indicates that such does not appear to be the case.

2. The four opinion leader types significantly differed in terms of (1) their perceptions of community and personal problems; (2) their communication patterns and media use; and (3) their social and demographic characteristics.

A profile of the four opinion leader types according to their differential perceptions of community and personal problems and their demographic characteristics is summarized below. The reader is referred to the final report of this research project for the statistical data and for the differences between the groups awarding to communication patterns and media use.

Key Informant opinion leaders—those identified as leaders by Black employees of local media—tended to name economic concerns as the most important problem facing the Black community, more often than the other types. For the Key Informants, political and organizational issues were the most salient personal problems. They perceived education and social-moral issues to be less of a personal problem than all other types. This type relied on other people for information about Black community problems and personal problems more so than the other types. They were likely to be male, nearly all had more than a high school education and had lived in the Columbus Black community for more than 10 years.

These Key Informants significantly differed from the other opinion leader types on nearly every indicator. It appears that this technique truly tapped a unique and elite group of Black leaders. Their longevity in the community and higher social status apparently gives them a different perspective of the community and its problems. It is also important to note that this group also differed from the general sample of Black residents.

The advantages of using this method are quite clear, it is less costly and less time consuming. Certainly an increased empathetic ability which goes along with higher education may allow this type of leader to perceive salient problems and to articulate their implications more fully.

However, this must be weighed heavily against the evidence which indicates that this type of leader is far removed from the everyday lives of other Black folk. The Key Informants tends to interact with others like themselves. Their problems and concerns are

the problems and concerns of an elite, representing a very small percentage of the Black residents of the community. As articulate, educated leaders of Black community groups, they would tend to be "easier to talk with" for public broadcasting personnel, since they share more common ground, language, and experiences than would other types of opinion leaders. Caution should be used in this regard. It appears that the public broadcaster will get an unrepresentative view of the problems of the community by relying on this opinion leader type exclusively.

Self-Designated Opinion Leaders

The self-designated opinion leaders were drawn from the general sample of Black residents according to their scores on five self-report questions which indicated their opinion leadership status.

This opinion leader type viewed educational issues as the most important problem facing the Black community, more than the other types. They were a bit more likely not to respond to the questions than were the others. Their perceptions of personal problems differed from the Key Informants, but not drastically from the other types. They were more likely than the Socially Designated or Volunteer opinion leaders to name political and organizational problems, among those which they faced personally. The Self-Designates relied on traditional mass media sources for information about Black community problems more than did the Key Informants and Social Designates. They were more apt to name "other" sources of information about personal problems than were the other tyes.

Demographically this type was differentiated most drastically by education. They were far more likely than any of the other types to have had only a high school education, or less.

The Self-Designated opinion leaders are uniquely from the other types of opinion leaders, particularly the Key Informants and Volunteers. The thing which distinguishes this opinion leader type from a general sample of respondents most is their willingness or ability to answer the questions. The general survey and non-opinion leaders were least likely to respond to nearly every question.

What is most important about this type is that they appear to reflect the perceptions of the community and its problems, the interaction patterns of the community and the demographic characteristics of the community more closely than the other opinion leader types. That is, they view the community most like the general folk of the Black community view the situation.

The advantages of using the Self-Designated technique are that it is relatively easy to identify these leaders in conjunction with a general survey of the community. By simply adding several questions, the Self-Designated opinion leaders can be partialed out of the sample of responses. In this way the leaders of opinion within the sample can be more carefully scrutinized and evaluated. It would also afford the broadcaster an insight as to the problems of the community as viewed by the people who are most likely to ex-

perience the problems. The language used and perceptions of the community from this vantage point would give the broadcaster a better sense of the Black community members who are in need of services the station might offer in the way of programming.

The disadvantages of relying exclusively on this technique is that these leaders tend to have a more limited range of experiences by which to assess community problems. Their lower education and level of information about the range of community problems would be somewhat limited.

Socially-Designated Opinion Leaders

The persons others turn to for advice about community problems were labeled Socially-Designated opinion leaders.

This type was more likely than the other types to name social and moral issues as the most important problems facing the Black community. They were less likely than the other types to mention education as the most important problem. In terms of personal problems, these social designates noted economic concerns significantly less often than the other types. They tended to rely on religious sources for information about community and personal problems more than the other types. The Social Designates tended to be older than all other types.

This opinion leader type, like the others, has a unique perspective on the community and its problems. They tend to be most like the Self-Designated opinion leaders and least similar to the Key Informants and Volunteers. They share more common ground and experiences with the Key Informants, however, than do the Self-Designates or the general sample.

The advantage of using this technique of identifying opinion leaders of community opinion is that it has the highest face validity. Certainly few would argue that the people named by community members as the persons who are turned to for advice about problems in the community are leaders who have a history of offering acceptable insights into the community problems for the members of the community who *have* the problems. Opinion leaders are by definition, members of a social system that other members go to for advice on specific topics.

It would appear that the Socially-Designated opinion leaders are the critical invisible leaders of opinion within the community. They were not correlated highly with people who were perceived to be community leaders. In fact, less than 20 per cent of the Socially-Designated opinion leaders were also perceived to be "community leaders."

Broadcasters should make every effort to identify these invisible sources of influence within the Black community and gain their support and insight. For these are the people that the viewers turn to for advice about the community and its problems.

The disadvantages of using this technique are many. Perhaps the most important is the cost in identifying these leaders. They are by far the most expensive interviews to complete because of the time required to correctly identify them and track them down.

This technique of identifying opinion leaders should be carefully pursued by public

broadcasters, though consultation with professional research teams appears to be advisable.

Volunteers

The respondents labeled Volunteer opinion leaders were those persons who responded to a series of spots aired on WOSU-TV during Black programs which invited Black viewers to volunteer to be interviewed. It attempted to solicit a sample of respondents who would typify callers to the station. The ascertainment primer suggests a variety of methods can be employed, including chance encounters and call-in programs. We were interested in the ways this type of "leader" might vary from other sources of influence in the Black community.

The Volunteers were least likely to name economic issues as the most important problems facing the Black community than all other types and were more likely to mention communication issues. In sharp contrast, the Volunteers were far more likely to name economic concerns as the most important problems that they faced personally. The Volunteers relied on mass media sources for information about both community problems and personal problems significantly more than the other types. None of this type turned to religion for information about personal problems. Apparently for the Volunteers, the media are relatively more important sources of influence about the community and its problems. Demographically this group varies from all the types. They are far more likely to be newcomers to their neighborhoods and younger than the other types. Like the Key Informants, most of the Volunteers had more than a high school education and were more likely to be male than female.

Clearly, the Volunteers are less well integrated into the Columbus Black community than the other types. It may be for this reason that they turn to the media for direction about community and personal problems. In any event, the Volunteers tended to respond to all the questions differently than any of the other types. These Volunteers are best characterized perhaps as "groupless voices," rather than leaders of voiceless-invisible groups. They make themselves known to the public broadcaster, and apparently view public television with some regularity. In many respects they may represent the current audience for Black oriented programming—young, transient and well educated. They do not appear to be a group of people that a broadcaster should rely on for information about the community and its problems. Because they are less well integrated into the community, their perceptions of the problems will seldom reflect the problems of the larger community.

The advantages of using this technique is that it is by far the easiest and least costly way to gain insight into the community. It further could be argued that the current viewers of a station are the community members who the broadcaster can serve most effectively. Especially since these Volunteers rely on media for information more than do other community members.

The weaknesses of this technique is that by relying on existing viewers and catering

to their perceptions of the community, the chance to broaden the base for larger viewership will be diminished. The Volunteers tended to see the problems of the community with a decidedly different set of perceptions than the other types. It simply did not represent the population of the community, even though it may have represented the population of viewers and it may very well have not represented the viewers of the programming either. There are simply too many questions concerning the representativeness of these respondents to rely on their views of the community and its problems for ascertainment purposes.

Implications and Recommendations

1. Public broadcasters should not rely on visible leaders of organized groups in the building of the master problem list for ascertainment if they want to have the problems reflective of the problems of the community and its members.
2. Public broadcasters should use Volunteers of opinion about the problems in the community with caution for building their master problem list since Volunteers do not appear to represent the perceptions of the community problems as viewed by the general population, or other leaders of opinion within the community.
3. Public broadcasters should attempt to identify the invisible Socially-Designated leaders of the community. This should be viewed as a continuing process. Although the initial cost of identifying these invisible leaders is high, these leaders of opinion should form a pool of names for subsequent ascertainment purposes. Once these Socially-Designated leaders are identified they not only form a rich source of information for ascertainment purposes, but are also the key to successful integration of the public broadcasting station into the community. Further, once a substantial pool of Socially-Designated opinion leaders is established, the need and usefulness for general surveys of the community is lessened.
4. The Self-Designated technique of opinion leadership does not appear to offer the public broadcaster enough additional information about the community to warrant its regular use.
5. Public broadcasters should experiment with the concept of problems which face individuals in the community personally, as a potentially rich source of data for building the master problem list.
6. Public broadcasters should enlist the advice and assistance of local university researchers, the Office of Communication Research of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and other professional social researchers in planning and implementing their ascertainment procedures.

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Progress Report on Continuing Ascertainment: Jacksonville and Tallahassee, Fla.

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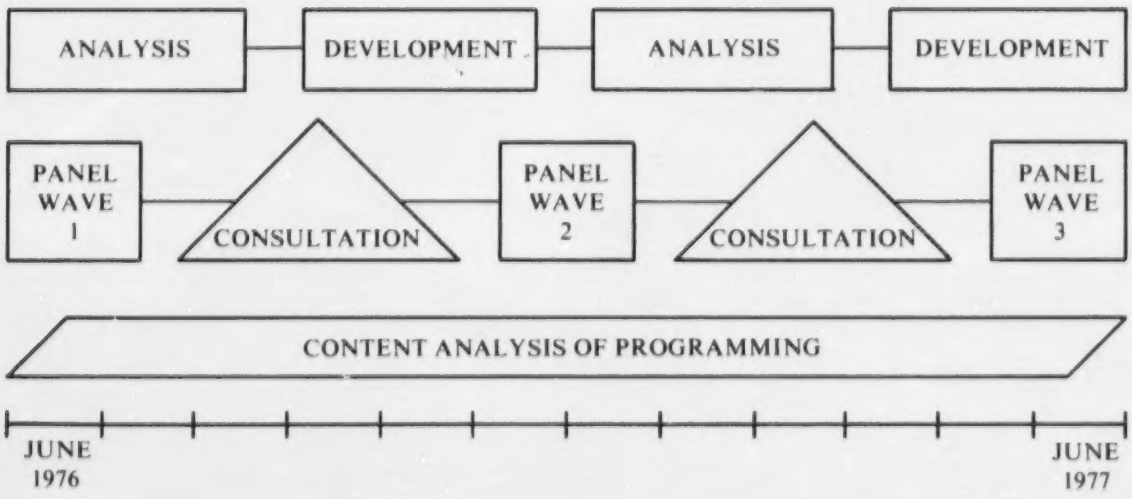
Florida's ascertainment project continues studies conducted in two public television markets since 1975. The overall goal of the project has been to develop a methodology for obtaining a valid perception of community problems on a continuing basis. Emphasis was placed on developing a procedure that was simple to administer and analyze, minimizing expenditures of staff time and other resources. The project investigated the utility of panel surveys as a practical and cost-effective means of continuing ascertainment for public television stations. Other questions examined were the use of ascertainment survey data to develop public affairs programming, and programming itself as a means of continuing ascertainment. Each research question will be discussed along with its appropriate methodology. The project is still underway, therefore this paper should be considered a progress report rather than a statement of conclusions.

Television stations WJCT-Jacksonville and WFSU-Tallahassee participated in the study. The same research design was used in each market. Three activities—a panel survey consultation with stations, and content analysis of programming—constitute the major project activities. Figure 1 illustrates how these components were coordinated over the year.

Effectiveness of the Panel

The initial interviews were conducted in June of 1976 with subsequent contacts planned for December 1976, January 1977 and May 1977. The original design called for reinterviews on a bimonthly basis. Experience soon demonstrated that this period of time was too short to execute and analyze a survey providing the detailed information requested by station staff. Collecting data every six months proved to be a more reasonable time span when analysis and consultation with stations were taken into account.

Figure 1
Project Outline



During the month of June 1976, telephone interviews were conducted with members of 297 randomly selected households in Jacksonville and 242 households in Tallahassee. Each respondent was asked how long he had lived in Florida; then a series of potential local problems was read, the interviewer asking if the problem personally affected the respondent. Altogether, 33 items were included on the master problem checklist. For reasons of economy and efficiency a split half questionnaire was designed. One-half of the sample in each city was asked one–half of the items; the other half of the sample the remaining items. Some items were asked of both groups as a check on the newly implemented procedure. Since both halves of the sample responded to these items in similar fashion, we were relatively confident that both segments of our sample were not very different as far as problem perceptions were concerned.

Tallahassee residents were contacted for the second time in December 1976, and Jacksonville residents in January 1977. Each city was interviewed over a period of two weeks and replacements were sought for original panel members who could not be located or refused to participate in the second wave of the survey. The amount of time allowed for interviewing was limited to two weeks in order to test the efficiency of the method. Interviews were conducted in both the evening and during the day. After attempting to reach a respondent twice in each time period, a replacement was chosen. Completion and attrition rates appear in Figures 2 and 3. Data are reported separately since our experience varied in the two areas.

Figure 2
Panel Attrition Over Six Months

	Completions	
	Jacksonville	*Tallahassee*
Wave 1	297	242
Wave 2	225	162
Attrition Rate	24%	33%

Figure 3
Completion Rates

	No Answer Call-Back	*Busy*	*Recording*	*No-Name*	*Break*	*Refuse*	*Other*	*Completions*
Jacksonville								
Original	319	80	19	28	3	36	6	180
Replacement	55	13	10	-	1	15	4	45
Total	374	93	29	28	4	51	10	225
Tallahassee								
Original	257	24	25	21	3	51	3	129
Replacement	64	10	20	-	1	17	1	33
Total	321	34	45	21	4	68	4	162

*Adjusted Rates**

Jacksonville		*Tallahassee*	
Original	42%	Original	29%
Replacement	55%	Replacement	28%
Total	42%	Total	28%

*The lower the rate the more calls needed to reach a respondent.

The attrition rate represents panel members dropping out of the survey from Wave 1 to Wave 2. The rate was calculated as the percentage of the total number of Wave 1 respondents not represented in Wave 2, including replacements. As seen in Figure 2 the Jacksonville panel experienced substantially lower attrition. The Tallahassee figure was somewhat disappointing but may be influenced by the proximity of the interviewing period to Thanksgiving and Christmas. Completion rates further demonstrate the differing success in reaching panel members in the two cities. The adjusted rates represent the number of contacts made before a completion was attained. Ordinarily, this rate reaches 80 to 90 per cent in a single wave survey. Closer examination of the completion rates reveals that the major problem encountered with this procedure is finding the panel members again rather than refusals to participate in the second wave.

The question of who drops out of panels must be addressed when discussing attrition over time. Figure 4 details the demographic composition of panel members not represented in Wave 2. Comparing these figures to the demographic composition of Wave 1 suggests that older respondents (51 and above) tended to drop out of the panel in Jacksonville, while other demographic indicators remained fairly stable. The Tallahassee market experienced a drop in the number of females contacted again in the second wave. Other than these instances, no specific demographic group appeared to be systematically excluded from the second wave. It should be kept in mind that the time factor strongly influenced the number of Wave 2 respondents reached.

Figure 4
Demographics of Unreplaced Panel Members
(per cent)

	Jacksonville	*Tallahassee*
Sex:		
Male	49%	41%
Female	49	59
Refused	2	0
Race:		
White	76%	81%
Black	20	16
Other	0	3
Refused	4	0
Age:		
Under 21	6%	1%
21-30	26	35
31-40	25	22
41-50	18	18
51-60	7	10
61+	11	14
Refused	7	0
N=( )	(72)	(77)

Another equally important issue is how to replace panel members while insuring that the sample maintains its representativeness through all waves of the survey. Replacements can be matched on a variety of demographic variables. However, the pro-

cedure becomes tedious and quite time-consuming. Besides matching demographic characteristics, the nature of ascertainment suggests that respondents also be matched in terms of their experience with community problems. In an attempt to achieve such a match, a "block replacement" technique was utilized. Because the original respondents were selected from a cross-reference directory it was possible to trace them back to a street address and randomly select another respondent who lived on the same block as the original panel member (Figure 5). The technique assumes that many community problems are residentially based and that limited geographic neighborhoods are fairly homogeneous. Demographic analysis of the substituted panel members reveal that the replacement method yielded a group very similar demographically to the original panel members.

Using Ascertainment for Programming Development

A survey of community problems becomes a meaningless exercise unless some action is taken based on the survey information. Station staff emphatically expressed the need for an ascertainment method that would yield programming insights. The second wave of interview format was designed to serve this purpose. In-depth inquiries were made for eight problems, chosen for either their high ranking in the original problem checklist or special interest to the station staff. The problems and their rankings since 1975 appear in Figure 6. The importance of all the problems has increased over time.

Crime, alcoholism and drug abuse constitute the important problems discussed in the interviews. At the request of station staff, utility rates and utility services were differentiated in the questionnaire. The results show that rates create more of a problem than service in both cities. Education seems to be more of a problem, which may have been brought to the public's attention by recent school board elections.

Figure 5
Change in Composition of Sample Using Block Replacement Method*

	Jacksonville (N=45)		*Tallahassee (N=33)*	
	Original	*Replacement*	*Original*	*Replacement*
Sex:				
Male	18	17	15	20
Female	27	28	18	13
Refused	0	0	0	0
Age:				
Under 21	0	2	3	2
21-30	9	12	9	8
31-40	9	10	5	4
41-50	5	7	10	9
51-60	8	6	2	1
61+	14	4	4	9
Refused	0	4	0	0
Race:				
White	34	34	25	27
Black	11	9	7	5
Other	0	2	1	1

*actual numbers

Figure 6
Per cent Acknowledging Problems Across Time

	1975	*1976: Wave 1*	*1976: Wave 2*
Tallahassee			
Crime	30%	50%	64%
Drugs	16	32	62
Education	16	32	55
Obscenity	31	39	34
Utility Service	-	-	22
Utility Rates	40	64	77
Alcohol	-	-	64
Violence	-	-	58
Jacksonville			
Crime	43%	56%	85%
Drugs	22	43	77
Education	23	36	57
Obscenity	35	43	41
Utility Service	45	55	21
Utility Rates	-	-	82
Alcohol	-	-	65
Violence	-	-	52

Degree of Seriousness. The checklist technique provides little detail about the specific situations surrounding the broad problem categories. Just a few of the questions that come to mind include:

- How seriously does the problem affect the community?
- Is the problem more critical for some groups than others?
- Are people aware of the problems because they are actually affected by them or are they merely reflecting what they see and hear in the media?
- Where do people stand in terms of information about problem solutions and understanding the cause of the community problems?

Checklist techniques largely result in a "popularity poll" of community concerns. Both the seriousness and the number of people affected by an issue should be considered in prioritizing problems for public action. A problem constituting a major detriment to a small segment of the community may be a more important issue than a mere annoyance affecting people throughout the community. An increase in the perceived gravity of a situation may also indicate the onset of a serious problem throughout the community.

Figure 7 illustrates the relative importance of problems in the two markets. Within this set of problems the higher a problem ranks the more likely it is to be a serious problem to a larger segment of the respondents. However, only high ranked problems were examined here. The "degree of seriousness" questioning technique needs to be applied to lower ranked problems such as job conditions, food shortages and adequate housing to test the contention that although these problems are experienced by a smaller segment of the population the issues are grave enough to merit more attention than implied by the simple ranking method.

Figure 7
Relative Importance of Problems
(per cent)

Tallahassee

	Total Yes	*Yes, Not Much*	*Serious*	*Very Serious*	*Other*	*Don't Know*
Crime	63.5%	21.0%	33.3%	8.0%	1.2%	8.0%
Drugs	61.7	24.7	22.8	9.9	4.3	24.7
Education	55.4	11.7	26.5	14.8	2.4	4.9
Obscenity	33.9	15.4	13.0	4.9	.6	6.8
Utility Serv.	21.6	9.3	7.4	4.9	0	2.5
Utility Rates	76.5	11.1	33.3	29.0	3.1	1.2
Alcohol	64.3	17.3	27.2	17.3	2.5	14.2
Violence	58.0	17.3	29.0	7.4	4.3	6.8

Jacksonville

	Total Yes	*Yes, Not Much*	*Serious*	*Very Serious*	*Other*	*Don't Know*
Crime	85.2%	8.6%	51.9%	23.5%	1.2%	8.6%
Drugs	76.6	9.9	41.4	24.1	1.2	19.1
Education	57.4	6.2	37.0	11.7	2.5	4.9
Obscenity	41.3	11.1	17.9	11.1	1.2	13.6
Utility Serv.	20.9	4.9	12.3	3.7		4.3
Utility Rates	81.6	9.3	38.9	30.9	2.5	3.7
Alcohol	65.4	13.0	33.3	18.5	.6	17.3
Violence	51.8	11.1	24.1	15.4	1.2	4.9

Source of Information About Problems. Surprisingly, a large proportion of respondents reported learning about problems first hand. Preliminary data analysis suggests that of those who cited the issues as problems, the majority of respondents became aware of drug abuse, alcoholism and education through personal experience and observation. Awareness of crime and obscenity was more often gained through the media. Of course, the obscenity issue is clouded since the media can serve as both information about and personal experience with obscenity. Respondents also disclosed a wide range of personal experience. For instance, many reported encountering crimes against the person—rape, shootings, robbery. There seemed to be little concern with white collar or organized crime. A disconcerting amount of awareness of drug and alcohol abuse was gained within the family. Respondents were amazingly frank in reporting these occurences. Most educational problems dealt with a lack of funding, resulting in a long list of specific instances of poor facilities and resources. As expected, knowledge of violence as a problem came from watching television. The most frequently reported instances of violence were police shows such as *Hawaii Five-O* and *Kojak*.

Who is Responsible and What Can be Done? The point came up in consultation with station staff that maybe another program about crime or some other issue may not help the situation. If people already have information on how to deal with a problem continual programming may either exaggerate the issue or cause people to grow tired of hearing about the problem and choose to ignore it. These questions sought to determine

what people actually knew about the issues and if they needed additional information that could be supplied through PTV programming. These decisions are by necessity judgmental and will be made in consultation with station staff.

Programming as Continuing Ascertainment

Both public television stations participating in the continuing ascertainment study enthusiastically promote public affairs programming. WFSU produces *Prime Time*, a daily public affairs magazine and regularly televises school board meetings. *Feedback*, the prize-winning public affairs program of WJCT, is also featured daily including city commission meetings. The staffs of both programs actively seek out community problems for discussion on the program. The shows also use a "Gripe Night" format where citizens can telephone and report problems or question guests who are either involved in solving or creating the problems. Because the programs are produced daily, it seems reasonable to assume that many community issues would be discussed. Theoretically, ascertainment identifies community needs and interests which are to be met, at least partially, by station programming. An argument can be made that active public affairs programming actually constitutes a form of continuing ascertainment. The validity of this contention will be examined by a simple content analysis of the problems discussed on programs during the project period. Some variables to be measured include type of problem or issue, total time devoted to issue and mode of presentation—informational, pro or con. This analysis will be compared to the problems generated in the panel surveys. If the problems dealt with in public affairs programming coincide with the needs and interests identified in the surveys, it implies that stations are already conducting continuous ascertainment through their public affairs programming.

Summary

The panel survey technique has thus far yielded valuable information as to the community problems encountered by the two participating markets. The technique appears to provide the richness of detail needed to stimulate programming ideas. However, several more pragmatic issues that might prohibit stations from using the format should be mentioned.

The first issue is manpower. Executing an in-depth survey similar to Wave 2 requires a full-time project director with clerical support for three to four weeks. Interviewers constitute the chief manpower resource, but the survey itself is simple enough to be administered by volunteers with minimal training.

Secondly, the in-depth survey requires a great deal of time. Interviews in the second wave lasted 20 to 30 minutes depending on the verbosity of the respondent. The third wave will experiment with problem rating techniques, which may provide similar information in a more time-efficient manner. Detailed information such as that obtained in the second wave is expensive in terms of both time and money. However, each station will have to determine cost-effectiveness taking into account their utilization of survey data.

How To Conduct A Cooperative Market-Wide Community Leaders Survey

Thomas M. Turner

Milwaukee
1977

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Introduction

There are at least five good reasons for television and radio stations in a market to ascertain community needs cooperatively.

1. RESEARCH IS RESEARCH.

Legitimate survey and market research techniques are duplicable. They turn the same results regardless of whether the research is being done by a public or commercial radio or television broadcaster, or a commercial or university research team.

2. 2 + 2 = 4. BUT WHAT DO WE DO WITH FOUR?

Answers can be the same for an infinite number of questions. Asking the right questions is vital, but how research answers are used in programming marks the real difference between public and commercial television and radio.

3. IT'S GOOD BUSINESS.

The common sense economies of cooperation make joint Ascertainment in the best self-interest of all stations in a market.

4. IT'S GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS.

Regardless of repeated claims to the contrary, public and commercial broadcasters within a market *are competitors* . . . for audiences, ratings, dollars, newspaper listings, press coverage, market awareness, corporate/institutional images, on-air image, creative and managerial staff, peer recognition and status. Joint Ascertainment is an effective way to demonstrate a serious willingness to play by the same rules and be judged by the same standards as your commercial competition.

5. IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR STATION

Cooperating on Ascertainment brings your station upper and midmanagement into noncompetitive contact with their markets' broadcasting counterparts as well as the social, organizational, political and business leadership of the community. As an added benefit, the Community Leader Interviews require your station management people to *listen* to other people and to try to understand their perspective. This regular immersion of station leadership into the problems and leadership of the community can result in sensitive and responsive management.

Stations in a market may or may not choose to supplement the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) cut and dried survey and interview requirements with a wide variety of other community input. . . suggested by their consciences, their market opportunities, their own creativity and intitiative and their attorneys. Among these supplements are: (a) Quarterly meetings of a small, core group of different persons to discuss problems in the community; (b) Continuing, periodic, formal interviewing of select community leaders; (c) Informal personal interviews by news and editorial staffs at community meetings, informal events, etc.; (d) Formal dinner meetings and; (e) Community cards, letters and phone calls in response to:

1. News items
2. Responses to editorials
3. Documentary public affairs programs
4. Community-Ombudsman-Helping programs.

Each station's management uses the results of many inputs to arrive at its final list of ten problems.

It should be stressed that personal judgment at many levels plays a significant role in shaping each station's list. This is as it should be. Finalizing the list is the role of management, not of research.

Cooperative Area Leadership Interviews have been used in various markets with success for many years (Milwaukee and Portland are two examples). Cooperative General Public Surveys are also used successfully in many markets.

How to Organize the Cooperative Effort

Start with a meeting of all market station managers to determine which stations wish to participate in a cooperative effort. A working luncheon meeting gets good response.

The agenda should propose a budget for the project, information on comparative costs if stations go-it-alone, and a station payment/cost assessment structure.

The managers should agree to:

1. Support a cooperative effort to be managed by a particular station, group or agency.
2. A tentative budget.
3. The geographical survey area.
4. Contract arrangements with outside survey/research groups to supply the General Public Survey.
5. The sample size and other specifications for the General Public Survey (including tentative dates).
6. Tentative dates for the Community Leader Survey interviews.
7. The number of leaders to be interviewed cooperatively.
8. The assignment of a contact person to handle work assignments at each station.
9. Length of each leader's interview.

Making these decisions at the first meeting is essential to get the co-op underway.

How to Manage and Organize Cooperative Leader Interviews

Create An Organization

Put five things together and you are open for business . . . *any* business, from ascertaining needs to selling record albums.

1. A NAME—To give you an identity.

Most markets do not have a permanent, formal broadcast organization. A pseu-

donym such as THE GREATER METROPOLITIAN ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS will do.

2. AN ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER – To give you a home.

Rent a post office box for six months to handle the volume of mail and establish a telephone number for the project coordinator. Print these on all letterheads.

3. A PERSON IN CHARGE – To identify responsibility.

An identifiable contact person clears lines of communication for everyone. Print this person's name on all print material.

4. AN IMAGE

Station Managers generally want to be represented positively and with style. The substantial elements of an image are comprehensive planning, smooth execution and meaningful followup. These boil down to *a good product*. We found that at least two other things are necessary. First, a knowledgeable and pleasant person to answer your phone. Above average intra-personal and office skills are required of this person, as are tact, discretion, persistence and patience.

Second a successful print image must be developed.

Your print package must be a unified one. It should impress without being ostentatious and convey essentials without being cluttered.

Pay particular attention to the quality of paper used for both letterhead and envelopes. A clean, simple, impressive layout works best.

Your print package should include the following pieces to mail: Printed Letterhead (on which is printed the association name, address, phone number, coordinating person's name and the call letters and names of managers of participating stations); Second Sheets (same type and weight as that used for the letterhead and envelopes); Outgoing Envelopes (print association name and address in the space used for the RETURN address); and Return Envelopes (print association name and address in the space used for MAILING address).

Pre-plan the number of each item printed to meet your needs. Better too many than too few of each piece.

5. AN ACCOUNTING SYSTEM

Use whatever works for you in keeping track of your cash flow, obligations and receivables.

Organizing the Leaders Interviews

The objective of Cooperative Community Leader Interviews is convenience for Community Leaders and Cooperating Station Personnel. Sessions *must* provide *each* Leader an ample open-ended opportunity to express himself thoroughly on community problems, and an equal opportunity for each Broadcaster to thoroughly question each Leader in a direct face-to-face environment. Your role is to provide, structure and insure this environment.

Here is a checklist with guidelines for setting up the sessions.

1. SET UP TIMELINES, DEADLINES, AND KEY DATES.

Whenever you are setting up interviews (whether for one day or ten days) have dates firmly established and backtime your work schedule accordingly.

2. DEVELOP WORK FORMS AND HAVE A SUFFICIENT SUPPLY PRINTED

To coordinate the scheduling of one or more conference rooms at the same time across several days, a wall-size grid is most helpful. Write in pencil because your entries will change. Smaller grids will be useful later to distribute interview schedule information to participants and interviewees.

A Community Leader Recommendation Form is useful. A supply of these forms should be mailed to each station's contact person and returned to the coordinator with the names of leaders each station wants included on the master leader list. Be sure to list each Leader's organization, address and phone number.

3. IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY LEADERS

Perhaps the most sensitive ascertainment requirement is the identification of community leaders to be invited and interviewed. There are many ways to identify "Leaders." Among them, the following: lists from past ascertainments; other stations; corporate underwriting prospects; various public affairs departments; the telephone book; and the community leader recommendation forms will create a healthy starting point for filling the 20 elements of the FCC Community Leader checklist.

Use a *small* group of area station community or public affairs directors to categorize, screen and finalize the master list. Circulate this list to the stations for last minute changes. Then invite these Community Leaders to participate. Of course, each station will need to contact and interview additional leaders on an individual basis and can use names that did not survive the group Master List screening.

One extremely important problem is the identification of "hidden leaders"... people who guide various aspects of community thought, opinion, activity, events or politics. Up-front leadership is easy to locate but in many cases the real power or opinion leader is not the up-front person. This is true in virtually all of the FCC categories.

Consider the case of the community organizer who provides expertise and direction for a number of community organizations, yet may be completely transparent to the stations in their quest for real leadership.

4. REPORTS TO THE STOCKHOLDERS

Remember to keep the cooperating station managers aware of your plans and progress by mailing them periodic, to-the-point, up-date letters.

5. SITE SELECTION

Your interview site should be as convenient to as many people as possible. It is most desirable to have all sessions at the same location to avoid confusion and it's just good public relations to select a site that is located in the "City of License."

Selection criteria should include convenient location, parking (valet is helpful in downtown locations), physical layout (adjacent rooms and a "headquarters room" work well), quality food/bar service and a good package price.

A good catering or special events coordinator at the hotel/motel site is a great asset when arranging conferences.

Sessions frequently last all day so early morning coffee and doughnuts and coffee and soft drinks during morning or afternoon break is a welcome relief.

6. SCHEDULING THE LEADERS

From the master list of Leaders, arbitrarily schedule people into the interview slots on your master grid. Remember to write names and list-reference[1] numbers in pencil.

When you are going through the arbitrary scheduling process remember that most interviewers will be in a conference room for up to 10 interviews per day. Try to schedule Leaders to give interviewers some variety in Leader catagories from hour to hour.

When your arbitrary scheduling is complete, mail individually typed personal invitation letters to each leader. Avoid the form-letter appearance. Rental or use of a "Mag-card" machine combines the advantages of a form letter with the personal look. Each letter should be personally signed by the project coordinator.

Each initial contact letter package should include a "turnaround" form, and stamped, return envelope. The turnaround form is used by Community Leaders for either confirmation, rescheduling or refusal; and also to provide some biographical information on the leader. Avoid the confusion of illegible signatures on the response form by typing each leader's name and list-reference code on the turnaround form.

Initial contact letter must be persuasive, well constructed, clear and above all, must get results.

7. RESCHEDULING AND REFUSALS

Rescheduling will run about 50 per cent. Fortunately, using arbitrary scheduling, the odds are that almost every interview slot that clears out can be filled by someone else who wants to change their time or date. Refusals should be handled personally by the co-ordinator and can usually be handled with one phone call. Reschedulings can be handled by the secretary or assistant.

Careful records must be kept. Lock in verifications and reschedules with some code on your master grid. Where it is not possible to reschedule a respondent where he wishes use the telephone to set up an alternative. Refusal slots should be refilled with fresh names, from the same category. You will want to devise a contact status tracking system. . . perhaps using coded shapes and/or colors on the grid. Each person's record-keeping techniques will vary.

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[1] *The list-reference number pin-points a particular name's location on your master list. It is a combination of the FCC category or element number and the individual person's number on that category list. For example, FCC checklist #8 is Environment and Harry Prockel is the 2nd name on the Milwaukee master list under environment. So when he is tentatively scheduled on the master grid the Code (8-2) should follow his name. In this way you will know what list he is on and can locate his specifics (i.e., organization, phone number, etc.) quickly.*

There will be a certain number of leaders who will fail to respond at all. The best way to contact these people is by telephone. Some will not have understood the scope of the activity, others simply will not have made a decision. At this point there is no substitute for perseverance.

Send follow-up letters of confirmation/verification *only* when a name is *locked-in*, regardless of whether that leader was finalized by phone or letter. Whenever a day's schedule grid is filled it can be final typed and distributed to station participants.

Reminder phone calls should be made to a Leader's office on the work day prior to his scheduled appearance.

Keep a few Community Leaders' names "unscheduled" to fill in last-minute cancellations. Only a frantic, last-minute phone campaign can sometimes fill unexpected vacancies.

8. THE INTERVIEWS

Set up daily accommodations with the hotel/motel staff prior to the arrival of station representatives and community leaders. Check the set up carefully each day. Conference rooms should be set up theater style facing a front speaker's table complete with a pitcher of ice water, clean glasses, table cloth, and two chairs. . . one for the guest and the other for the moderator/host.

Have a reception desk outside the conference rooms where the coordinator and his assistant act as hosts. Broadcasters and guests are to come to the registration table and sign in. Keep a daily (am/pm) attendance list for Broadcasters. This helps to keep track of which stations are adequately represented.

Very accurate records must be kept by the assistant of those Leaders who appeared, did not appear, or sent substitutes. During the day the assistant also makes phone calls to check on late arrivals and no-shows. Whenever possible try to schedule an alternate to replace an absent guest.

When each guest arrives they should be welcomed by the hosts, a name tag made out, and then introduced to the moderator for their session.

9. THE ROLE OF THE MODERATOR

The purpose of the interviews is to *hear* what each leader thinks are "the area's most important problems, needs and interests." Moderators in each room are essential to insure that the sessions maintain an environment conducive to fulfilling this purpose.

Solicit volunteer moderators from the audience of broadcasters and give them instructions explaining the job and responsibilities.

Moderator's should greet guests, usher them into the conference room and act as a host and moderator. Start each interview by introducing the guest and validating basic information which has been distributed to participants. (Name, title, business address, organization(s) represented.)

Guests can be set at ease if the participants introduce themselves (Name, station, affiliation(s), and position). The moderator then asks the guest to state, from their

organization's point of view what are the area's most important problems, needs and interests.

Moderators should ask guests to comment on any problems *starting* from their field of expertise. . . *but not limited to it*. This encourages leaders to respond personally as well as professionally. Moderators guide any question/answer interchange following a guest's remarks.

Moderators should not permit station representatives to argue with guests or engage in philosophical discussions.

When there are no further questions, the moderator thanks the guest on behalf of the broadcasters and ushers him or her to the reception desk.

The Business of Wrapping Up

After the final session the project must be wrapped up.

1. Follow-up Letter to Guests

A thank you to the Community Leaders is their record of their appearance and is your leavetaking until you ask them to participate again. . . and you probably will. You will be judged by what this letter says, and how it looks. Again, use individually typed personal letters.

2. Paying the Bills

It is just good business to pay your bills *as soon as they are received*. Don't wait until the broadcasters have paid you before you pay your creditors. If need be, you can always float a short-term loan at your bank to meet your cash flow needs. If you do, remember to add any interest to the bill you send the broadcasters.

3. Final Report

A final report letter should be mailed to the station managers represented by the cooperative effort. It should include:

a. The final budget.

b. A complete final list of Leaders who appeared, by FCC category (name, position, affiliation(s), address and phone number).

c. A complete list of Community Leaders whose names were on the original master list, but for some reason were *not* interviewed. (This also provides a record of attempts to contact each individual and why you were unsuccessful.)

d. And, of course, your bill based on the pre-agreed, share-per-station. The bill should include administration time and build in a profit. While this may not be consistent with the present philosophies of some people in public broadcasting, it is consistent with the survival of the business of Public Television. Ten to 15 per cent for your "time and effort" is acceptable and indeed sensible.

5. Collection

Some follow-up may be required in order to get checks from some broadcasters. Usually this can be done with a phone call. Sometimes circumstances require other, more innovative collection techniques.

Coordinating your market's cooperative ascertainment effort successfully can be a real plus for your station in many ways. The problems are varied, the track is fast and the rewards are long term. . . perhaps intangible. But the economic savings coupled with the gratitude of the other broadcasters in the market makes the experience worthwhile.